

NIMHD Propels Health Disparities Research by Joining Trans-NIH R01 Grant Program

The National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) recently announced that it has signed onto the parent trans-National Institutes of Health (NIH) R01 research project grant program, thrusting investigator-initiated research on minority health and health disparities into the spotlight.

“NIMHD’s participation in the investigator-initiated R01 grant program is a very exciting development for NIH,” said Sally Rockey, deputy director for NIH’s Office of Extramural Research. “The R01 research project grant is the mainstay grant mechanism of NIH. By providing the opportunity to apply for these grants, NIMHD is enticing the brightest scientific minds to embark on creative and critical research that will help improve minority health and reduce health disparities.”

Advances in medical research are improving the health of the U.S. population overall, yet many populations are not experiencing the same health outcomes. Diseases such as cancer, diabetes, and heart disease disproportionately affect racial and ethnic minority, socioeconomically disadvantaged, and rural populations with higher prevalence, earlier onset, faster progression, and poorer outcomes.

As part of its effort to catalyze innovative research addressing health disparities, the then-National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NCMHD) published its first solicitation for R01 projects focused on health disparities research in 2009. The scientific community responded with nearly 170 applications from across the U.S. covering a wide range of research topics. Since 2010, annual solicitations by NCMHD and NIMHD through requests for applications (RFAs) have generated nearly 1,000 applications, including 274 applications for fiscal year 2014 alone.

This response reflects a growing interest in and commitment to the science of health disparities by the scientific community. However, these solicited R01 programs limited the project budgets and restricted new grant applications to a single receipt date each year. NIMHD’s participation in the trans-NIH investigator-initiated R01 program signals an ongoing commitment to support investigator-initiated research on minority health and health disparities. Participation in the program will also provide greater budget flexibility to applicants and the opportunity to submit new and competing continuation (renewal) applications three times a year using standard receipt dates.

“By signing on to the parent NIH R01 program announcement, we hope to encourage even more scientists across the country to tackle the complex and pressing challenges posed by health disparities, taking advantage of increased flexibility and opportunities to submit investigator-initiated applications,” said Michael H. Sayre, Ph.D., acting branch chief in NIMHD’s Division of Extramural Scientific Programs.

The NIMHD investigator-initiated R01 research program will support research projects in two broad areas: basic and applied biomedical research; and social, behavioral,

health services and policy research that focus on one or more health disparity populations. Populations for this research program include African Americans, Hispanics, American Indians and Alaska Natives, Asians, Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders, socioeconomically disadvantaged populations and rural populations.

NIMHD Acting Director Yvonne T. Maddox, Ph.D., is excited to announce NIMHD's commitment to support a robust investigator-initiated R01 program on minority health and health disparities research by joining the trans-NIH investigator-initiated R01 program. She strongly encourages minority health and health disparities research investigators, including new and early-stage investigators seeking NIH funding for the first time, to apply for R01 grant awards through the parent funding opportunity announcement PA-13-302.

"The science of health disparities is complex with no single avenue for medical discovery," said Dr. Maddox. "By expanding our programs to include investigator-initiated research we hope to create fertile ground for creativity and synergy in the research community. The involvement of new investigators is essential to the vitality of research to improve minority health and eliminate health disparities."

Organizations of all types, including universities, colleges, small businesses, governments, for-profits, nonprofits, faith-based and community-based organizations, are encouraged to participate in the grant award program. Information on the grant program can be found at <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/not-md-14-003.html>.